Leadership Training

Laboratory seeks new approaches to stimulate citizen awareness of dynamic, changing forces.

By DOROTHY and H. CURTIS MIAL*

POWERFUL social, economic and technical forces are at work in the American community, altering the nature of the community, demanding that our organizations and institutions be reshaped, remaking our way of life. Communities are urbanized, fragmented, faced with big problems—and by and large are attempting to solve them with archaic structures.

Accelerated change makes sound analysis essential. But what do we analyze—and how? And what skills do we need if we are to plan and take action?

Most urgently our communities need competent leadership—leadership capable of recognizing dynamic forces in changing situations, able to work *with* people rather than *through* them or *for* them, able to help release creative energies in others, prepared to bring scientific inquiry into practical affairs and skillful in cooperative planning and action. But where do we turn for training for what is surely the most demanding role of a democratic society?

Since 1947 the National Training Laboratories of the National Education Association, functioning through a staff network of behavioral scientists located at universities across the country, has been engaged in applying knowledge to human problems of living and working together. NTL grew out of concern that accelerated change in physical technology was accompanied by almost no innovation in social organization. When we move into the area of community organization and development, the obsolescence of social machinery used is conspicuous.

To borrow phrases from John E. Bebout, director of the Urban Studies Center at Rutgers University and guest resource on local government at the community laboratory last summer, we have "horse and buggy boundary lines," "antiquated organ-

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AUTHORS' NOTE: In describing the new approach to community leadership training initiated by the National Training Laboratories (NTL) of the National Education Association, we draw freely from statements made by other members of the staff team at last summer's program at Bethel, Maine: Edward O. Moe, professor of sociology and anthropology at Michigan State University and chairman of the Staff Planning Committee; Richard Franklin, director of the Community Development Institute, Southern Illinois University; Donald Klein, executive director of Human Relations Service of Wellesley, Inc.; Martin Lakin, assistant professor of psychology and psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center; Weldon Moffitt, director of the Bureau of Community Development at the University of Utah; Warren Schmidt, lecturer in personnel management, Graduate School of Business, University of California, Los Angeles; and Roland Warren, research director, New York State Charities Aid Association.

ization and procedures," an "urbanized society dominated by rural legislatures," and a lingering presumption of "rural virtue holding out against urban sin." Despite "galloping urbanization," despite automation, despite the continuing collapse of space and time as they affect movement and communication, we stubbornly resist reorganizing local government.

In an era of specialization, as Aaron Levine, director of the Philadelphia Citizens' Council for City Planning and guest resource on planning, said, we assume linkages that haven't been forged—between the professional and the volunteer, between government office and citizens' group, between national headquarters and local chapter, between the physical planner and the social planner.

The need for a new approach to community leadership training may thus be spelled out as the need for innovation in community organization—which in turn calls for an experimental approach and understanding of the processes of change—and the need for better linkages—interpersonal, interprofessional, interorganizational. If we are to do anything significant about the problems of deteriorating cities, alienated populations, inadequate induction of youth into the adult world, inadequate utilization of human resources, difficulties in communication and transportation and inadequate support for essential community programs, we will have to train more effective diagnosticians of community forces and more adequate practitioners in community improvement and development.

Origins of the Program

In 1958 the National Training Laboratories undertook an inquiry into the relevance of NTL experience to community leadership training. More than a hundred interviews with leaders in many fields encouraged NTL to initiate an experimental program. An advisory committee representative of diverse community interests has helped to develop the program. The Third Annual Community Leadership Training Laboratory is scheduled for July 8-20, 1962, at Bethel, Maine.

Delegates have come from all parts of the nation. They have included both volunteers and professionals from both public and private agencies. Their specific concerns have included urban renewal, planning and housing, schools, health, welfare, recreation, youth, the aging, economic development, community relations, better local government.

Training Objectives

Information and good intentions do not lead automatically to the solution of community problems. Most of us know better than we do. People somehow get in the way of rational progress from data-gathering to planning to action—people who don't really hear one another, who are unaware of the consequences of their own behavior, who are insensitive to the needs of others and to the conflicting pressures they may be under when they sit down in a community action group, who are unskilled in group membership and leadership.

These then are objectives of human relations training as it relates to community leadership: self-awareness,

sensitivity to others and to group processes, skill in achieving teamwork, diagnostic ability to analyze problem situations, and knowledge of the community and of forces effecting or preventing change.

What is Laboratory Training?

The work unit even in urbanized communities is the small group and at a laboratory the basic training unit is a group (the T Group) of about twelve members. Other elements in the program include theory sessions, problem analysis sessions giving practice in applying laboratory learnings to back-home problems, and "participative cases"—one of the most effective means yet devised for re-creating the complexities of community situations with their many groups, competing pressures and differing values so that participants can analyze their own behavior under pressure.

In the T Group, delegates have the task of creating a unit whose members can communicate with one another, can accept—and value—individual differences, can work together and arrive at workable decisions. Elements taken for granted in other groups are absent or blurred. There is no designated leadership, no stated goals—other than to learn about self and about groups—no prescribed procedures for defining goals and developing leadership, no established norms or standards, no shared expectations as to how one should behave in this group. A trainer, generally a psychologist or a sociologist, is present but he is not a discussion leader or chairman. His function is to help the group learn from its own behavior.

The need to fill in the missing structure leads members to try out the ways they usually behave in groups. But here behavior that normally goes unchallenged is examined as to actual consequences in the group. Each person may know his own intentions but how do others in the group perceive his behavior? To the extent that mutual trust is developed, members find that they can express their reactions openly and that they are ready to hear the reactions of others. In the process of developing structure and the roles to be filled if work is to get done, T Group members are engaged in creating, in miniature, a culture—a community. And they are learning through experience and analysis of this experience a great deal about leadership and authority, about power and influence, about group standards, about communication, about membership, and about the relationship between levels of trust and productivity.

Problem Analysis

Believing with Einstein that a problem adequately defined is in large part solved, the staff built into the laboratory design opportunity for delegates to help one another define and redefine a problem troubling them in their own community. Each person had practice in defining a problem, in helping another person define his problem and in acting as observer to help evaluate the processes of definition and of consulting.

Did perspectives actually change in the course of the laboratory? Two definitions are illustrative:

One delegate defined his problem at the beginning thus:

How do we in a community which is not research oriented enlighten the action groups to feel that goals of research and of action are related?

At the end of the two-week laboratory, the delegate commented:

The problem is the same. However, I have gained some understanding of how one might go about solving it—or some aspects of it. Often even the professionals do not understand or feel comfortable with research. Researchers (like me) may defeat their own purpose by seeing themselves as God and by tending to feel that other approaches are not valuable or needed. Maybe I did not sincerely feel (even though I said it) that action people are needed by researchers for their ideas as well as for their willingness to open their files to us. I need to believe this—really—myself and then find procedures for collaboration.

A second delegate began with this as his problem:

A conservation officer's function is not really understood by staff. This creates a "drag your feet" attitude in the community.

Later he said this:

The problem is essentially the same—regional office lack of acceptance of program is transferred to the localities making their lethargy even more difficult to cope with. However, I believe I have greater insight as to the reasons for my confreres' lack of enthusiasm and I am eager to evaluate the situation and to let the program speak for itself rather than try to drum its worth into ears which I have probably closed.

In general, problems tended to become less "global," less directed at what "they" ought to do, more directed at consequences of the individual's own behavior.

Delegates came to see their problems from new perspectives. They were also learning how to give and receive help. At one session Edward Moe spoke of the temptations present whenever one is involved in the helping relationship—"and this seems to be almost all the time." For instance, the temptation to "take over" instead of to help; the temptation to tackle everything at once (one probably needs "the heart of a reformer, the eyes of a critic and the restraint of angels"); the temptation to display one's talents; the temptation to prolong dependency; the temptation to align oneself with one group or faction, not because this will be helpful but because of the power of that group; the temptation to "use" people to fill one's own needs.

Problem analysis sessions were opportunities to relate laboratory learnings to back-home problems. They were also a confrontation. Can we use what we are learning in coping with actual problems? Can we do differently—more effectively—those things we have to do?

Theory and Information

There were two blocks of theory. Theory sessions on the community dealt with forces and pressures on the individual in today's changing community and with the influence of these pressures on individual values and goals, by Curtis Mial; with dimensions of community analysis and how they may be applied in various situations where it is necessary to understand the community in order to take action, by Edward Moe and Roland Warren; with problems and opportunities in attempting to give and receive help, by Edward Moe; with the process of change in the

community, by Don Klein; with the role of the "change agent"— one who would replace fortuitous change with planned change based on deliberate decision to accomplish certain things, by Weldon Moffitt and Curtis Mial; with causes of community conflict and some principles involved in resolving conflict, by Richard Franklin and Roland Warren; with community power and some ways for assessing the power and influence structure of the community, by Edward Moe; with models of community action and the influence of one's own assumptions about human behavior on how one organizes for action, by Curtis Mial; with the need for a reformulation of community theory which would somehow bridge the gap between the sociological study of the community and the concerns of the community development practitioner and between the community as it actually exists today and as it is seen in tradition, by Roland Warren.

Small group theory dealt with the individual in the small group, by Weldon Moffitt; with the emotional climate in the group and its influence on group action, by Martin Lakin; with communication in groups—the processes by which we influence and are influenced, by Warren Schmidt; with motivations in individuals and in groups, by Martin Lakin; with dilemmas of leadership—what decisions *should* I make alone and which should I share? Can I be efficient and democratic at the same time?, by Warren Schmidt; with "learning how to learn," by Weldon Moffitt.

What was learned?

Plans for the 1962 laboratory call for building research into the training design so that results can be more accurately determined. In the meantime it is possible to assess results on the basis of research conducted in similar training programs and on the basis of unsigned evaluation forms filled out at the end of the laboratory and again three months later.

The laboratory initiated processes of learning that continue for many delegates. In the small groups they are working with—the committees, boards, staff conferences, yes, even the family as several delegates have said—they listen more carefully. They are a little slower in evaluating —more careful to see that the evidence is in before judging, more accepting of individual differences. They are as concerned as ever over getting the job done but more aware of the necessity for maintaining the group as a productive unit and less centered on task alone. They see more clearly that *feelings* are practical realities to be dealt with in solving problems. They are more ready to share responsibilities of leadership, more confident that resources can be found in the group to meet needs that arise.

A number of delegates have pointed out that they have been introduced to new concepts, new information and theory that is related to work they are trying to do. For some, the theory was "nothing new" but its continuity and relatedness to real problems was new. For the majority, the most significant learnings came in the area of self-awareness. As one person put it, "I took a very close look at myself and in doing so I acquired a broader understanding and more tolerance for other per-

sons." For some, the laboratory brought more enthusiasm for experimental approaches to problems; it opened up possibilities for taking a fresh look at assumptions and for testing their continuing validity.

For all, the laboratory provided opportunity away from distractions of home and job and community to explore some significant questions—about community, about groups, about change, about learning, about self.

There is no magic formula for answering these questions. A training laboratory has been successful if it stimulates community leaders to ask questions that need to be asked and if it provides some of the means for a continuing quest.

AFTER REAPPORTIONMENT

(Continued from page 250)

units of our federal system and in *coordinating* the programs, activities and personnel that deliver an important proportion of the services of domestic government to the people. This role is both a policy-making and an administrative one. It involves participating in the actual development of policy prior to its enactment in national or in supplemental state statutes. It involves also some adaptation of policy to regional needs and conditions. On the executive or administrative side it offers the opportunity for some regional (i.e., state-level) coordination of related programs and adjustment of program emphasis.

All of this is to raise a general question whether the classic prescriptions for reform—of which reapportionment is a major one—are realistically geared to the states as they are today. The argument is certainly not that we should abandon the classic prescriptions but rather that they be examined in the light of American federalism 1962 style.

Reapportionment, and with it the other classic prescriptions for reform —strengthening of the governor, the removal of legislative restrictions, the simplification of the judicial system and the construction of a more rational scheme of local government—may be as appropriate to the states in the future as in the past. But the matter has not been given sufficient thought. In so far as scholars and reformers are able to affect the development and structure of state government and politics, their objectives should be determined by the present and developing role of the states in our federal system and not by some outmoded conception of the state as a semi-sovereign domain.